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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 000149

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STATE FOR ISN, T AND EAP  
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TAGS: [TSPA](#) [AS](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN COMMENTS ON COLLISION OF IRIDIUM/COSMOS  
SATELLITES

REF: STATE 12948

Classified By: Political Counselor James F. Cole. Reasons: 1.4 (b)(e)

11. (SBU) In the absence of a unified GOA point of contact on space matters, we delivered the talking points on the February 10 collision of the U.S. Iridium and Russian Cosmos satellites simultaneously to Group Captain Denny Davison, Director for Defence Space Coordination, Australian Department of Defence, and to Cameron Archer, Director for Defence Policy and Liaison, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

12. (C) Davison drew our attention to press reports citing a Pentagon spokesperson who acknowledged the United States "missed the event and did not detect it," and sought confirmation whether that was indeed the case. (We have seen media reports quoting Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman saying "We did not predict this collision" but have seen no reporting along the lines suggested by Davison.)

13. (C) DFAT's Archer queried whether there were any hazardous materials released as a result of the collision, and whether there was any indication that debris would re-enter the Earth's atmosphere and, if so, where the probable points of impact would be. On the second point, we responded the debris cloud was still being studied and tracked, but noted the small mass of the debris made the risk to hazards to humans and property on Earth very low, per background in reftel.

14. (C) Archer told us the Government of Australia was beginning to recognize the need for a central, unified point of contact in the GOA on space matters, noting the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet had taken up the issue of possible creation of a new office of space affairs.

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